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## Union Brotherhood, Union Town: a History of the Carpenters' Union of Chicago, 1863-1987

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that a complex nexus of material, economic, and ideological factors goes into the processes of choice and adaptation to change. The history of technology, as he rightly notes, is not just a matter of new machines, but involves as well the changed social and cultural orders that accompany them. His astute awareness of multiple factors involved in material historical change, that is, the everyday life on individual farms, and his close attention to how farmers both initiated change and responded to it, preclude any broad summaries about "industrialization" or "modernization" that was imposed from outside on resistant, traditionalist farmers.

Stylistically, the book is unremarkable. The writing becomes general and categorical in places, as Rikoon's interest in group dynamics and change makes categories of people rather than shows us the individuals who lived and worked in the past. The accounts from his fieldwork interviews help alleviate a sometimes tedious style, but the book would be improved by a greater inclusion of those voices.

An important problem with the book is Rikoon's treatment of the gender implications of threshing in particular and of rural culture as a whole. Women do not figure prominently in his discussion, either as active field workers or in other roles. His only sustained attention to women's work is in the chapter on meals and social activities, which appears almost as an afterthought. Although he interviewed farm women for the book, Rikoon seems to have adopted the traditional rural ideology of gender, which relegates women to roles as "helpers" rather than as full participants in the entire range of rural activities. More attention to the ways changing machinery altered women's work in all kinds of tasks would be a valuable addition to his treatment.

Still, this is a nicely detailed and subtly argued piece of work that should interest those concerned with the development of farming and rural life. Rikoon's study stops just before the period of rapid change associated with World War II, but the groundwork he lays gives clues to the impetus for ideas and technological change that have created the rural culture that we now know.

*Union Brotherhood, Union Town: A History of the Carpenters' Union of Chicago, 1863-1987*, by Richard Schneirov and Thomas J. Suhrbur. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988. xvi, 211 pp. Illustrations, notes, appendixes, index. \$24.95 cloth, \$14.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY PETER RACHLEFF, MACALESTER COLLEGE

In commemoration of their hundredth anniversary (1981), the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of North America commis-

sioned a number of historical studies. These projects resulted in the first reexamination of the Carpenters' experience in some thirty years. During that period, the approach to labor history has undergone a transformation from a narrow, economic concern with union institutions to a broad, cultural consideration of workers' lives on and off the job. *Union Brotherhood, Union Town* offers an exciting synthesis of the "old" and the "new" labor history, making this book of interest well beyond its specific topic.

Richard Schneirov and Thomas Suhrbur work within the framework of the "old" labor history. Their categories flow from the institutional development of the carpenters' union, and their primary concern is the union's evolution. Internal to these categories, however, is the rich social detail of the "new" labor history: the changing structure of the building industry, the transformation of carpentry work (via technology and reorganization), and the changing makeup of the carpenter work force itself. Moreover, the authors have drawn on the detailed research that has already been conducted on Chicago's working class, placing the carpenters within the broader context of the evolution of the Chicago labor movement as a whole. Although the results are uneven (the late nineteenth century receives much more thorough treatment, for instance, than does the period since World War II), *Union Brotherhood, Union Town* is a significant accomplishment. Not only do the authors weave together the "old" and the "new" labor history, but they attempt to speak to a popular as well as an academic audience. Despite some stylistic awkwardness (their use of sidebars for documents, for example, at times disrupts the flow of their narrative and distracts the reader), they are largely successful. This is a readable, informative book.

Schneirov and Suhrbur have also broken some new ground with specific elements of their analysis. They show carpenters to have been anything but the isolated, craft-conscious labor aristocrats that some readers might expect. Throughout the period covered by this book, Chicago's carpenters were buffeted by sweeping changes in the technology of building construction and materials, by the dynamics of contracting and subcontracting in the building industry, and by a constant influx of skilled and partially trained carpenters from Europe, Canada, the East, and from the rural Midwest. For much of the period, their wages, their living standards, and their social status in the community were comparable to those of unskilled factory laborers. In their efforts to better their conditions, Chicago's carpenters reached out to other workers, frequently leading campaigns to build craft solidarity among all building tradesmen. In critical historical contexts — during the labor upheavals of the 1880s and in the World War I era, for instance — the carpenters led

the way in building broad class solidarity, from organizing unskilled factory laborers themselves to promoting the organization of the unskilled throughout the city and including them in the labor movement. Interestingly, Schneirov and Suhrbur demonstrate that it was at such points that the union was able to make the most gains in wages and working conditions for its own members.

More and more unions are examining their own history today. There is a new generation of labor historians asking new questions and offering new insights. *Union Brotherhood*, *Union Town* provides us with a taste of the fruits of the collaboration.

*Circles of Tradition: Folk Arts in Minnesota*, by Willard B. Moore, et al. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1989. xii, 162 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$18.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY STEVEN OHRN, STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

*Circles of Tradition* is a product of the most recent statewide folklife survey funded, in part, by the National Endowment for the Arts. Since 1976 similar projects have been undertaken in sixteen states. In most instances the projects were sponsored by a state arts council and conducted by one or more folklorists undertaking fieldwork on a statewide basis. The results of the surveys include major exhibitions, catalogs, and extensive archival holdings of audio tapes, photographs, and field notes. I conducted Iowa's survey in 1982, which led to an exhibition and book both titled *Passing Time and Traditions: Contemporary Iowa Folk Artists* (1984).

Coming to grips with an acceptable definition of folk art has been a common challenge to all of the state survey projects. Moore's project is no exception; both the exhibition and the book reflect his attempt to define folk art/tradition in such a way as to include a range of aesthetic expression broader than most previous state survey exhibitions. Moore's model for analyzing Minnesota folk arts consists of three concentric circles of tradition: integrated, perceived, and celebrated. The inner circle describes traditions most closely associated with community life, while the outer circle contains those least associated; between are traditions perceived or thought to be appropriate community expressions. Although no hierarchy was intended, it is strongly implied, especially to those who highly value authenticity.

*Circles of Tradition* is a beautiful book, faithfully mirroring the exhibition it accompanies. Profusely illustrated with excellent black-and-white and color photographs, it combines academic essays on various aspects of Minnesota folk art with a catalog documenting Willard

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